

Machine Shop Village Streetscape Improvement Project

A Brief History of Machine Shop Village

The town of North Andover, location of the early settlement of Andover, was incorporated in 1646 and has had a long history since colonial times. The town has experienced many transformations: from an early agricultural community, to a significant industrial community, to a desirable residential community with a rural feel. The town has been active in recognizing its rural past with preservation of open space and rehabilitation and improvements to the “Old Center” district.

The town’s industrial past has not been recognized or preserved as well as its rural past. Of the four large mill complexes built in the nineteenth century to support the textile industry, only two remain in any recognizable form. The Osgood mill has been converted to condominiums, and the Davis & Furber Machine Shop to offices.

The Davis & Furber complex was built to manufacture textile machinery. Machine Shop Village sprung up around it and was central to the development of North Andover as a manufacturing presence in the nineteenth century. The surrounding residential neighborhood was originally constructed for the machine shop workers and owners. The majority of the structures within present day Machine Shop Village date back to the textile manufacturing era.

Machine Shop Village has been identified as a historical resource, and as such has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, Machine Shop Village is a resource that has not been maintained by the town in recent years. Limited budgets and focus on other neighborhoods has lead to a condition where sidewalks and curbs, where present, are often poorly constructed or old and in disrepair. There are many safety hazards, including decrepit sidewalks, missing sidewalks and curbs, old tree wells that have settled to create tripping hazards, and poor lighting. The present materials in the streetscape are generally modest, utilitarian and do not reflect the historical nature of the neighborhood.

Machine Shop Village is one of the characteristic elements of North Andover and it deserves to be recognized and preserved. Improvements to the streetscape within the area would help improve and enhance Machine Shop Village and help identify it as an important part of our town.

Note: Historical information obtained from the book *A Good In-land Town, Buildings and Landscapes in North Andover, Massachusetts, from 1640 to 1940*, by Steven J. Roper with photos by Gayton Osgood, 2001

Machine Shop Village Master Plan

Using Community Preservation Act funding, a master plan for streetscape improvements along 13 streets was completed for Machine Shop Village by the landscape architecture firm Carol R. Johnson Associates of Boston in February 2005. The Master Plan contains recommendations for improvements to the streetscape based on an assessment of the existing conditions and public input. Public involvement was solicited in many ways: volunteers distributed flyers door-to-door within the neighborhood; flyers were posted in public locations downtown; articles were published in the *Eagle Tribune* and *North Andover Citizen*, and public meetings were held.

Master Plan recommendations included installation of heirloom-style lighting, installation of granite curbing, addition and reconstruction of sidewalks, installation of heirloom trees, and traffic calming measures. The specifics would be determined during the design phase. The Master Plan contained recommendations for prioritizing improvements.

Machine Shop Village Streetscape Improvement Project Phase I

At May 2005 Town Meeting, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) recommended that \$250,000 be allocated for Phase I of the project. In order to concentrate the recommended funding and make a more substantial improvement over a shorter distance, Elm Street has been recommended for the majority of the Phase I funding, rather than spreading the money thinly over a larger area. Design work is currently underway for Main Street, Elm Street and Water Street, with construction on Elm Street anticipated for the spring of 2006.